



# Town of Groton, Connecticut

## Meeting Minutes

### Town Council Committee of the Whole

45 Fort Hill Road  
Groton, CT 06340-4394  
Town Clerk 860-441-6640  
Town Manager  
860-441-6630

**Mayor James L. Streeter, Councilors Bruce S. Flax, Bill Johnson, Catherine Kolnaski, Deborah B. Monteiro, Frank O'Beirne, Jr., Deborah L. Peruzzotti, Paulann H. Sheets, and Harry A. Watson**

**Tuesday, August 9, 2011**

**7:00 PM**

**Town Hall Annex - Community Room 1**

#### **REGULAR MEETING**

#### **1. CALL TO ORDER**

*Mayor Streeter called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.*

#### **2. ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Streeter, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor O'Beirne, Jr., Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Watson

*Also present were Town Manager Mark Oefinger and Executive Assistant Nicki Bresnayan.*

#### **3. Calendar and Communications**

*Mayor Streeter noted receipt of communications from Michele Kravath, and State Senator Andy Maynard and State Representative Elissa Wright regarding the Mystic Education Center. The Mayor also received an e-mail from Bob Peruzzotti about the status of the Town Council/RTM/Board of Education Liaison Committee.*

*Councilor Watson noted that he received information on an event to turn in unused medications.*

*Councilor Flax reported that the Noank School Reuse Task Force survey has been completed. He hopes to distribute a summary of the responses at the August 18th Task Force meeting.*

#### **4. Approval of Minutes**

##### **2011-0163 Approval of Minutes (Committee of the Whole)**

##### **RESOLUTION ACCEPTING COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE MINUTES**

RESOLVED, that the minutes of the Town Council Committee of the Whole meeting of July 12, 2011 are hereby accepted and approved.

**A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Kolnaski, to adopt.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

#### **5. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

*None.*

#### **6. NEW BUSINESS**

##### **2010-0170 Local Vendor Bid Preference**

##### **Discussed and Recommended no action taken**

*Purchasing Agent John Piacenza distributed a list of Town bids for the last two years. Of approximately 40 bids, there are only two instances where local vendor bid preference may have applied. Councilor Sheets asked if more detailed information identifying local bidders could be provided. She also questioned how local vendor's is defined. Mr. Piacenza provided the most common definition, but noted that if this is approved, the Town Attorney will have to review it. Councilor Peruzzotti noted that during discussions with the EDC, it was explained that there are not many local vendors for the items that the Town is bidding. Councilor Johnson noted that he previously e-mailed Councilors information about states that use local vendor bid preference. He*

*feels it is an incentive that would bring businesses to Groton. Councilor O'Beirne asked how the situation would be handled if there were two local bidders. Mr. Piacenza explained that the Town uses a lottery for tie bids. Councilor Flax expressed concern with instituting this policy and wondered why local vendors wouldn't give the lowest bid to begin with.*

*Mr. Piacenza explained this is a philosophical decision. Some of his counterparts in other municipalities believe that it local vendor bid preference undermines the bid process and some vendors take advantage of it. It may also discourage vendors that are not local from bidding. The percentage within low bid ranges from 2% to 15% in the towns that Mr. Piacenza surveyed. Mr. Piacenza would recommend no higher than 5%.*

*Councilor Monteiro expressed concern with changing the process when there are so few opportunities to use local vendors and also with vendors underperforming if they lowered their initial bid. The existing bid process has always worked.*

*Councilor O'Beirne asked if Gary Schneider's concerns have been addressed. The Town Manager explained that the bid process is different when working with a construction contract. He stated that he was prepared to go through the concerns if the Council chose to proceed with the policy. Councilor O'Beirne suggested a vote on whether or not to develop a formal policy.*

*Councilor Flax suggested that the percentage should be based on the size of the contract. He stated he could support a policy for goods and services, but not construction. Councilor Sheets feels that such a policy would reinforce existing businesses as well as attract new businesses. Councilor Peruzzotti suggested that the Council should not fix something that isn't broken. Councilor Kolnaski stated that she is satisfied with the current system.*

*The Mayor polled the Committee and three Councilors (Johnson, Sheets and Flax) expressed support for further development of a local vendor bid preference policy. Mayor Streeter and five Councilors (Peruzzotti, Watson, Monteiro, Kolnaski, and O'Beirne) did not want to pursue local vendor bid preference.*

**2010-0191****Bluff Point to Preston Trail - Update****Discussed**

*Dave Holdridge, Chairman of the Tri-Town Trail Committee, and Karen Mortenson, grant writer, have been working on an application that is due September 1st for a Recreational Trails Program grant in the amount of \$200,000. The group will apply for one grant from Groton and one from Ledyard. The group is asking the Town Council to authorize the Town Manager to apply for the grant. Several residents of Groton have been involved in the tri-town trail effort and a master plan has been developed. Ms. Mortenson explained that the grants are federal funds passed through the state and they are usually awarded to municipalities. This would be a reimbursement grant with a 20% match. The Tri-Town Trail Committee would work with the Town to provide the match. In Groton, grant funds would be used for a trail from Bluff Point to the Mystic Marriott on Route 117. In Ledyard, grant funds would be used for design work.*

*Doug Ackerman, who is currently managing Parks and Recreation, noted that the trail is consistent with the Town's Master Trail Plan. Long term maintenance would be the Town's responsibility. The 20% match can be in-kind services. Councilor Monteiro asked what effect Groton Utilities' refusal to open the reservoir property has on the grant application. Mr. Holdridge stated it has no effect on this portion of the project. The group hopes to have further discussions with Groton Utilities in the future. There are alternatives to using the reservoir property, but they are more expensive. Councilor Watson expressed support for the trail and noted that unfortunately, the RTM voted down a similar grant in the 1990s. He commended the group on their effort.*

*Town Manager Oefinger explained that the Town has very few details on this project. He recommended the Council's support, noting that there will be a lot of questions going forward. The application can be withdrawn in the future if necessary.*

**A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Peruzzotti, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.**

*Councilor O'Beirne expressed support for the trail concept, but he feels that providing matching funds will be difficult in the current fiscal environment. Councilor Sheets asked about the need for an additional budget appropriation. The Town Manager explained that there is no need for the Town to fund the match because the Tri-Town Trail Committee has indicated they will come up with the match. The grant is awarded in the spring, which will allow questions to be answered and matching funds to be raised. Ms. Mortenson noted that the group will be seeking 501(c)3 status and looking for private rather than municipal funding support. The Ledyard Town Council has not yet met to consider the group's request to Ledyard.*

**The motion carried by the following vote:**

**Votes:** In Favor: 8 - Mayor Streeter, Councilor Flax, Councilor Johnson, Councilor Kolnaski, Councilor Monteiro, Councilor Peruzzotti, Councilor Sheets and Councilor Watson

Opposed: 1 - Councilor O'Beirne, Jr.

**2011-0164 Historic Documents Preservation Grant (2012)**

**Discussed**

*The Town Manager explained that this is a recurring, non-matching grant in the amount of \$6,000. The funds will be used by the Town Clerk for preservation of historic documents.*

**A motion was made by Councilor Watson, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2011-0166 Reauthorization of Application for Port Security Grant for a Marine Patrol Vessel**

**Discussed**

*Mike Crowley, Acting Chief of Police, explained that the Town Council previously approved a grant application for the purchase of a marine vessel. After some delay in the federal government's award, the Town was notified that it was authorized to receive a larger grant than what was previously approved. In addition to purchasing a boat, funds will be used to train officers in boat operations. Acting Chief Crowley noted that there are significant functional, structural, and operational problems with the existing vessel. Once a new Memorandum of Understanding is signed, the funds will be released and it will take about six months to build a boat.*

**A motion was made by Councilor Sheets, seconded by Councilor Monteiro, that this matter be Recommended for a Resolution.**

**The motion carried unanimously**

**2011-0165 Status of Mystic Education Center**

**Discussed**

*Town Manager Oefinger provided packets of background information on the Mystic Education Center for Councilors. On August 1st, the Town received a letter from the State indicating that the Mystic Education Center will be closed as of September 30th, which will affect Parks and Recreation programming and potential reuse of the property. The Town Manager noted that the Town has had numerous discussions with state officials over the years in the hope of being able to do some community planning in anticipation of the facility being closed. The Economic Development Plan outlined the planning process; a series of communications from various officials were exchanged regarding reuse of the property; and a task force was established in the 1980s, however the Town's efforts were never successful. The State has indicated that it may be able to delay the closure by one month because of an existing business that needs more time to*

move. Once the property is declared surplus by the State, an appraisal will be done and the property offered to the Town.

Doug Ackerman and Parks and Recreation staff have been looking at programming alternatives. Parks and Recreation currently uses the facility for swimming, gymnastics, and ballroom dancing, along with some field sports. The Avery Point pool will be made available to the Town on weekends in the Fall and Winter. The upcoming issue of Discover has been revised. The Town's aquatics program will be at a smaller scale and the Avery Point pool is not as warm as the pool at the Mystic Education Center so the therapeutic programs will be different. Gymnastics will move to William Seely and ballroom dancing will be moved to the Senior Center. Because the programs begin in October, having an additional month at the Mystic Education Center will not be helpful. Mayor Streeter noted receipt of a letter from Mrs. Kravath who is concerned with the pool temperature and availability of adaptive equipment at the Avery Point pool.

The Town Manager recommended that the Council tour the property and meet with the State to discuss the planned closure and potential for reuse. He noted that portions of the property have already been turned over to the State DEEP. The property is zoned for single family residential. During initial discussions, the State indicated that it would like the Town to take over the state-owned portion of Oral School Road.

Councilor Watson noted the number of pool programs that take place at the Oral School and he reiterated that the Town needs a pool. Councilor Peruzzotti feels that local legislators should be invited to the tour. Councilor Flax also feels there needs to be a plan before the facility is closed. The Town Manager showed an aerial photo of the property and noted in general the areas turned over to DEEP. It is unclear what will be done with the parcel that is being used by the Fire Department for training. The Town Manager briefly reviewed other uses that are occurring or have occurred on the site.

**2009-0039****Recommendations of the Task Force on Climate Change and Sustainable Community****Discussed**

It was noted that a joint meeting with members of the former Task Force has been scheduled for August 23rd. Councilors were asked to forward their questions, concerns, or suggestions to the Town Manager prior to the meeting.

**2011-0162****City of Groton and Groton Long Point Highway Budgets****Discussed**

Mayor Streeter noted that he discussed this issue at length with Marian Galbraith and Bob Congdon. All agreed that it would be best to have an ad hoc committee develop a program for making comparisons between the three budgets. The Mayor suggested that the ad hoc committee include the Finance Directors of the Town and City, the directors of the highway departments, Police Chiefs, the Mayors and Groton Long Point President, and the Town Manager. The three also agreed to look at updating the Pavement Management Program. The Town Manager would recommend bringing the original firm back for an update rather than trying to update the program in house. The Pavement Management Program is a tool and there are many other decisions that go into deciding what roads to pave. If the desire is to meet annually or to develop a five year plan, that can be done internally. Town Manager Oefinger noted that other communities have bonded for multiple road projects. Discussion followed on bonding versus doing annual projects.

**2009-0166****Townwide Police Assessment****Discussed**

Mayor Streeter stated he has had two informal meetings with Marian Galbraith and Bob Congdon where this issue was discussed. All parties are amenable to moving forward with the Townwide Police Assessment. A tentative date has been set for a meeting to finalize the scope of services for the RFQ.

**7. Consideration of Committee Referral Items as per Town Council Referral List**

- 2010-0169 Utilization of Commercial Solid Waste Fund Balance**  
Recommended for Deletion
- 2011-0133 Clean Water Fund Grant for Water Pollution Control Facility**  
Recommended for Deletion
- 2008-0121 Condition of Chipperini Property on Library Street**  
Recommended for Deletion
- 2009-0284 Judson Avenue Drainage**  
Recommended for Deletion
- 2011-0012 Power Outages in Noank**  
Recommended for Deletion
- 2011-0152 Central Hall Building Project - Update**  
Recommended for Deletion

**8. OTHER BUSINESS**

*Due to the lack of a quorum, the Town Council meeting on August 16th will be cancelled. The Council scheduled a special meeting of the Town Council on August 23rd at 6:00 p.m., followed by a special meeting of the Committee of the Whole at 6:30 p.m. The Mayor indicated he would also like to have a joint meeting with the Board of Education.*

*Councilor Peruzzotti noted that she will not be attending upcoming Town Council meetings because of a class she is taking.*

**9. ADJOURNMENT**

*A motion was made by Councilor Kolnaski, seconded by Councilor Flax, to adjourn the meeting at 9:12 p.m.*

*The motion carried unanimously.*